

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

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R 051518Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7256

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGUI

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 05612

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR FR XA

SUBJECT: GISCARD AND FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT AT BANGUI

1. GISCARD'S FIRST OFFICIAL TRIP ABROAD SINCE HE

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ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY DID NOT RECEIVE FRONT-PAGE COVER-

AGE IN ANY MAJOR PARIS DAILY THE MORNING OF HIS DEPARTURE (MARCH 5) FOR THE FRENCH-SPEAKING SUMMIT IN BANGUI. THIS LOW-KEY TREATMENT OF A SEEMINGLY NEWSWORTHY EVENT REFLECTS THE SOMEWHAT CYNICAL, ALMOST EMBARRASSED ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE GATHERING THAT QUAI OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED TO US OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS.

2. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, THE FRENCH AGREED TO THE SUMMIT IDEA ONLY AFTER STRONG URGING FROM HOUPHOUET, SENGOR AND BOKASSA. WHILE IT HOPES TO MAINTAIN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH FRANCE'S FORMER COLONIES, THE QUAI BELIEVES THAT THE UTILITY OF HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS WITH THE SMALL FRANCOPHONE AFRICANS IS LIMITED AND THAT FRENCH "COOPERATION" IS MORE EFFECTIVELY HANDLED THROUGH BILATERAL CHANNELS. MOREOVER, THE FRENCH THINK THAT SUCH GATHERINGS, GIVEN THEIR NEOCOLONIAL COLORATION, MAY BE HARMFUL TO FRENCH RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES SUCH AS NIGERIA, ALGERIA, KENYA AND ZAIRE WITH WHICH PARIS WANTS TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS. HENCE, THE QUAI DOES NOT EXPECT MUCH TO COME OF THE SUMMIT BUT VIEWS IT AS MARGINALLY USEFUL AS A FORUM FOR EXCHANGING IDEAS ON SUCH QUESTIONS AS DC ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE LDC'S AND PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM INFLATION AND OIL PRICE INCREASES. IN CONNECTION WITH THE LATTER, THE FRENCH WILL DOUBTLESS SOLICIT SUPPORT FOR GISCARD'S APRIL 7 ENERGY CONFERENCE FROM THOSE ATTENDING THE SUMMIT BUT ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE DEGREE TO WHICH SUCH SUPPORT WILL ADVANCE FRENCH INTERESTS.

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